

don't write *that* book!

Episode 84:

“When to Take a Break from Your Book”

Mike Michalowicz: Welcome back to the Don't Write That Book podcast where you can learn how to write your bestseller and own your authorship. Follow along with us as we give you an insider's view of the book industry. Now, here are your hosts, myself, Mike Michalowicz and AJ Harper. I find it funny, at least it happened in my life.

Sometimes we achieve that thing we're aspiring to achieve, and that's when the burnout happens. So before I tell you my story, you gotta check out Julie B's book. It's *Burned: How Business Owners Can Overcome Burnout and Fuel Success*. I played lacrosse in college. I started playing lacrosse when I was in high school my freshman year, and this is back in the eighties and nineties before lacrosse was super popular.

So you could actually go pretty far. Well, I was playing in college and I became the captain senior year. The team votes me to be one of the co-captains along with two other players, which is usually the pinnacle of your ability. And that was the year going into senior year. I'm like, I can't do this another day.

Then mentally, I just checked out. I said, I don't want it to do it anymore. It's so rote. And it was my worst year. I performed my worst year and I'm, I was captain.

AJ Harper: Mm.

Mike Michalowicz: Isn't it a shame? Uh, authors write books and they, they're at the moment, they, they've put their soul into writing a great book, and now they have to go onto the field of marketing.

AJ Harper: Yeah. They just bail..

Mike Michalowicz: . That's horrible because you have this wonderful product that can transform the world and you give up on it.

AJ Harper: You're so burned out with the process of writing, editing, and getting it to market.

Mike Michalowicz: Correct.

AJ Harper: And you don't have anything left. I think that's why Julie's book is, is so important for our listeners.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: Right? It helps reset your mindset. You can find a way, not just through it, but to embrace where you are. And then take two steps up. So the book is burned, how business owners can overcome burnout and fuel success. And Julie B is not just sharing theory. She's worked with countless entrepreneurs, business owners, and guess what?

If you're an author, you are an entrepreneur, you are selling a product. It's your book. She's worked with hundreds and hundreds of folks to overcome it, and now she's giving all to you in the book, so get your copy today burned how business owners can overcome burnout and fuel success. As I was saying, so I have a wedding that I put this couple together and they asked me to be.

Uh, uh, first of all, as I was saying, so I have a wedding that I put this couple together and they asked me to be the flower girl. Funny, cute.

AJ Harper: Mm. They know you well.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And then they said, uh, we want you to make a toast. Um, but now I gotta write up a toast for it. But it's gotta be, they said they can gimme these parameters, but think it's gotta have a little funny, it's gotta end on a sentimental touch.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: So I need, I may ask some regards.

AJ Harper: You need a, you need a core message.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. What do you think the core message could be?

AJ Harper: Well, what's unique and true, what have they taught you? What have they taught you in their relationship?

Mike Michalowicz: Ah,

AJ Harper: what have, you know? How long have they been together? A few years.

Mike Michalowicz: No, only a year. It was so interesting. So how they connected was, both of them said almost at the same time, I'm looking for the right, somebody else, and they defined each other. So it was so, I was like, oh my. Gosh, you are looking for each other. And they lived across the states or country. They, they were 800 miles apart, introduced them, boom.

Getting married.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: Are they gonna be long distance?

Mike Michalowicz: In their marriage? No. And in their dating, uh, Mike, he's the guy, uh, has been moved, moved down to Chattanooga, where Tina lives.

AJ Harper: she's the one.

Mike Michalowicz: She's the one, yeah. He was in Chicago.

AJ Harper: So then how about this? Here's just an idea, just spit balling.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Ask yourself what did they, what is seeing their relationship develop. Mm. Taught you. Mm. That all of us need to learn?

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, I like that.

AJ Harper: How about like taking a chance? 'cause he moved down to Chattanooga

Mike Michalowicz: Taking a chance. I, I think being patient, so

AJ Harper: Oh yeah. Being patient, knowing what you want.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. So it's a, it's, it's starts with a sad story. His wife passed away, um, she, uh, divorced. Um, and both his wife passed away, and it's sad. You become the most eligible bachelor in the world because he's in his fifties. Um, he's... The women. Were all over him. You, you become a magnet because you, you're a wholesome good guy and you've achieved some success, or in this case, a lot of success in his life, financially, in other ways.

He's got wonderful children and he's like, I, these women are just, you can't vet out like who wants to? Who wants a connection versus who wants something else? But then Tina is just like, no, she's just looking for a soulmate. You know?

AJ Harper: So this then, then make a core message about second chances.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm. I like that. Yeah, I like that.

AJ Harper: So you need to write one.

Mike Michalowicz: I know.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: And then if you really wanna be touching about it, really do share how watching their relationship influenced you.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I like that.

AJ Harper: Yeah. How their relationship can even influence someone who's been married a long time.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm. I love that.

AJ Harper: There you go. You can, you can rock it now.

Mike Michalowicz: I love it. I love it. Um, I'll work on a speech while I'm working on the book. You know, what we're gonna talk about today is actually taking a break from books.

AJ Harper: Yeah. You wanted to talk about this. I'm so curious as to why you wanted talk about it, but I'm actually excited about it because you've never wanted to take a break from writing.

Mike Michalowicz: I know. I know. This is something I need, need to explore for myself Before we kick it off, uh, for our listeners you're listening to, don't Write that book, I'm joined studio with AJ Harper, uh, author of Write a Must-Read also the form the most. Sought after educator when it comes to authorship. So if that's what you're looking for, go to ajharper.com.

Um, oh, and we got a sponsor now.

AJ Harper: We do have a sponsor.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, we don't start reading by that sponsor yet, but we are accepting sponsorships.

AJ Harper: Woo-hoo. Sponsors.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It's nice when you get a sponsor to come to you because your show not 'cause we're seeking, we weren't seeking a sponsor.

AJ Harper: No. It was an inbound request.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: Uh, what I think, uh, I like that kind of sponsor too, that wants us to talk about their book.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. That, that's exciting.

AJ Harper: You know, so if you want us to talk about your book, let us know.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. We can read it and check it out. Alright, let's kick right into it. Um, so the, the, the, the opening question I think for both of us is, why would you wanna take a break from a book? You, you've seen so many authors, you've worked with so many authors who've written books. I don't know if I'm the anomaly. Who feels this compulsion? Am I the compulsion?

AJ Harper: 100%.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. I'm like, I gotta get more out. Um, but I'm being deliberate this time. I'm not gonna write another book, which will then, I'm hoping, redirect my hypomania to market. Market. Market. Market.

AJ Harper: Yeah. But let's clarify, 'cause I know this is the topic you wanna talk about, but when I was doing the outline, I wondered, okay, wait. Do you mean take a break from the book entirely? Meaning everything to do with the book or do you mean take a break from writing?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, that's a great question.

For me, it's take a book, take a break from writing.

AJ Harper: Right. Because you're an author, it's your career author. You've got a body of work. Yeah. If you take a break from all your books, I. What, what will happen?

Mike Michalowicz: I'll tell you something that was interesting. So yesterday I just got back in from Las Vegas and I'm flying, I'm like literally avenue flying out to Boston, back to Vegas. Speaking's kicked up and Oh good. Yeah. Well, thank God it was been, our first quarter is our worst quarter and a long time. Um, but thank god a, uh, a cascade of events came in. So I'll be doing my speaking now, last-minute speaking gigs, but I got home. I hopped in the sauna for a little bit. I'm like, I just want to disconnect, 'cause I was, I wrote the whole flight back.

Now this was not a book. I was writing all the marketing material for the money habit. We're doing a new, uh, weekly newsletter. So I'm just writing, writing, writing. Literally as I was walking up the plane, the flight attendant pat my shoulders, she goes. Did you get all your writing done, honey?

don't write *that* book!

I'm like, was I that intense? Because I didn't say anything. I just, as I got on the plane, I'm like, I'm typing as I'm walking in and typing as I'm walking out and I'm like, no, I didn't get it all done, but I got a big chunk done. I'm in the sauna and just, this is the short disconnect. It's a half hour of just thinking and like, oh, I got a crazy marketing idea. Maybe we could do that.

What's interesting is I think not writing. Will give me space to focus on other things like marketing.

AJ Harper: Oh yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: I mean, in a much bigger way.

AJ Harper: Not writing also gives you space to think about writing. It's actually a natural part of the writing process is letting yourself just ponder, tinker, you know, explore things.

But let's go back to clarifying this. Yeah. Do you mean take a break from writing?

Mike Michalowicz: I do.

AJ Harper: So you don't mean take a break from everything with your book, because listen, I have people who just abandoned their books entirely.

Mike Michalowicz: No!

AJ Harper: yeah. I have people who aren't talking about it. I have people who've just, um, or I have those people for sure. But I also see it so often because it's, that's usually when the book is transactional.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Nooooo!

AJ Harper: So. Don't get, or what happens is people, they don't get the results they think they should have had, which is usually those results were crazy expectations that they never should have had in the first place, or they didn't put in the required amount of work and ingenuity required to get those top level of results. So now they're disappointed and therefore they're not gonna do anything with it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: It's just something I did. I'm gonna, it's in the past, and that's a lot of people, Mike. Yeah. So that's, that's, that's why I wanted the clarification, because some people give up on their book.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Not just the writing. Writing the writing of books.

Mike Michalowicz: That's a shame.

AJ Harper: And the, and I mean, give up, like they're not taking a break. They're just taking a forever break.

Mike Michalowicz: You know, for me, there's so much purpose in the book and what it can do, I would feel I've given up on like humanity or myself or my mission or purpose. I, I, I would feel like I've just given up. That would be so depressive, depressing for me.

AJ Harper: I think so, too. So, okay, so to clarify. When should you take a break from writing? And you're not talking about sitting in the sauna. And it's so funny, I thought you for sure, you were about to talk about the cold plunge again, because it starts with a sauna.

Mike Michalowicz: It ends with a cold plunge.

AJ Harper: So kudos to you for not bringing up the cold plunge today.

Mike Michalowicz: I restrained myself. Yeah.

AJ Harper: but there's two more episodes to record, so we'll see

Mike Michalowicz: I'm in the sauna—

AJ Harper: But you don't, you don't mean that though. You don't mean 30 minutes off you. I, I thought you meant like--

Mike Michalowicz: A break and I do mean a break.

AJ Harper: A pause.

Mike Michalowicz: A pause. Yeah. So. I can't say I'm committed to a two-year break, but as of right now, that's the vision because it's a number that you said actually, Hey, a couple years off.

AJ Harper: I think you need it. I mean, I think actually you would, you would've been happier with the results for Get Different and um, All In if you had, there was more space in between.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. And would those books even exist? I mean, what if, what if it was just private first and I, and now it's like, okay, now we're ready for the next book. Like if I push Profit First to that level.

AJ Harper: I mean, first of all, I love that you created body of work. Let's just, you know,

Mike Michalowicz: I'm very proud of that.

AJ Harper: And there's very little missing from it if you want to be an entrepreneur.

Mike Michalowicz: Right. It's that that was the whole idea. And there's still some more I, I feel this compulsion to complete the compendium.

AJ Harper: What, what? Sales?

Mike Michalowicz: Sales. Sales is the biggest one. Um, there is Oh, selling.

Selling a business. I. Because that brings a full cycle.

AJ Harper: Yeah. It's really hard though to that we outlined that whole thing, but we just don't,

Mike Michalowicz: There's something there. I need to put more testing into it. Okay,

AJ Harper: so there's maybe two more books left in the body of work.

Mike Michalowicz: No customer service. I have like all written down, I've, I literally have now about 40 more topics in the business space.

AJ Harper: Okay. But here's the deal. You know now that you need a lot of space to let that build.

Mike Michalowicz: That's the truth.

AJ Harper: And I think some of you were trying to do the licensing thing. It worked really well for Clockwork, but then it didn't work well for some others.

Mike Michalowicz: For Get Different. It didn't work well. Yeah.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And so, you know, you need to give you, you need to give it time to get legs.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: For sure, for sure. I, um, and I agree. And it also gives, I think it's gonna gimme this mental space, but it's gonna allow me to focus on marketing, um, in relationship building. So here's another interesting thing. So sauna, I think, oh my god, there's an interesting marketing idea and I won't share 'cause it, it's so out there and uh, and maybe something we try out, I call a buddy of mine I haven't talked to in like six years just 'cause I'm thinking about marketing right when I get out of the sauna before the cold plunge. Oh, there it was.

And his name is Phil. I said, Phil, I'm writing a book on personal finance. He's like, I, I texted him, he goes calling you now, and he's like, here's what we, we can do. So he writes, he, he works in a space around credit scores and bankruptcy. Uh, he owns this company called seven 20 Credit Score.

And he says, when a lot of people go into bankruptcy, their credit score is of course ruined. Um. Or they have a very low credit score and they're in the border of bankruptcy, how do you recover? And he helps him from the legal side. So he is the perfect compliment. He gets you in touch with a lawyer, how you navigate it. Uh, and so there's an overlap of consumers of this, so it's like we can, we can support each other. He has hundreds of thousands of people that have gone through his program over 15, 20 years that could potentially read *The Money Habit*. *The Money Habit* could introduce people that are, some people are gonna be in such a difficult spot that, that just trying to manage your cashflow may not be enough and you may need some legal help or something like, ah, I can turn it to him.

It's just interesting. It is something that I probably wouldn't have thought of. If it's like, oh, I gotta start writing the next book. 'cause it becomes all consuming.

AJ Harper: Yeah. And I think that you've been on this mission to keep writing books, not necessarily thinking about the, thinking about the books you wanted to write or hitting that number, but not necessarily thinking about if it's a good idea to in that moment I think you just were not getting, wanting to get off the

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, that's fair. I, I think how I justify it is, but entrepreneurs need this.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And I think they need everything we've written.

AJ Harper: Sure.

Mike Michalowicz: Um, but I didn't do, I didn't give the books the proper care by marketing properly. It's, it's about *Get Different* isn't extra what the books weren't compromised.

Like *Get Different* is great.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: No, the books are great.

Mike Michalowicz: All In, up to that point, which, our most recent, is I think the pinnacle of our work. And I think the money habits an even. Yeah, we keep climbing the mountain, I feel. Um, and all ends doing, doing well, Clockwork's doing well, but they're not doing profit first level, and they all deserve the Profit First level.

Um, but I'll get, I'll get emails or calls from, or letters from readers who are like, my gosh, I just read to get different. It's the best book ever on marketing.

AJ Harper: I just heard from one last week.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I heard from someone.

AJ Harper: I was in a meeting and someone said, oh, I love Get Different.

Mike Michalowicz: I said a, a book club. The the, uh, they, they asked if I would just present for 10 minutes. They're studying get different, uh, and like this book is so good. And so it's frustrating that the book hasn't done better, but it's really not the book, it's the effort. After the book came out, and I didn't put it in because I was jumping to the next book

AJ Harper: Literally, and just for our listeners, as soon as we would finish the proofread, we were already, we had, first of all, when it's in production, which begins with copy edit, we would've scheduled the retreat. Yeah. For the two of us, we would, I would already be on our calendars. (Yep.) And then after the proofread very shortly, we would already

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Be meeting about the next one.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. You know, taking a, a break from the writing and more of the doing, it's the marketing effort for The Money Habit, already is com coming together to be far better? Uh, so I am writing perhaps even, well, I can't say harder, but like this flight yesterday, I wrote for five hours just nonstop. I didn't even drink water, just like go, go, go, go. But it's all building the marketing content for the launch period, the preamble to that and so forth, which before would've been much more kind of a, a side dish as I was, as we're working on the next book.

You know, um, working on building the author connections. So this guy Phil, his name is Phil Tyrone, is one example who's not an author, but he's in the space, uh, talking with other authors. Uh, I have a call coming up with, uh, Ramit Te Satis, who's in the personal finance space, um, and some other folks. And I think I'm still discovering stuff.

don't write *that* book!

For the book. I was teaching The Money Habit again last week to some folks and just some like, just little bitty, itty bitty refinements to come out and, and maybe it'll be in the book or maybe just in the, the secondary supplemental material. (Mm-hmm.) But there is still learning that's going on.

AJ Harper: Okay. So you're about to take a break from the book, so I, I'm thrilled to hear that. I think you're gonna have a big awakening. That's my prediction. I think you're going to realize when you go deep on a book like that. (Yeah.) How it shapes you and what you wanna do next. And I think you've been on a track, and I don't think there's anything wrong with the track, but I'm thrilled for you and I'm, I'm also really happy for myself. (Mike laughs)

Well, it's true. It's fair. Yeah, it's true. Because for fifth, well. 2008 is when we started, so...

Mike Michalowicz: 17 years.

AJ Harper: For 17 years, dude, we were little pups. Yeah. So for 17 years. We have, uh, almost always been working on a book, except we, we got five pictures of us from back then we had, we don't have any, I know we never take pictures.

Mike Michalowicz: I know.

AJ Harper: We don't do a lot of stuff.

Mike Michalowicz: No, no celebration.

AJ Harper: Just no pictures. But, but my point is we've done 12 books in the 17 years. Mm-hmm. There were, there were break there. We had that break.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: But, um, you were still working. We just weren't working together for a short time. So that's a lot of books in 17 years, man.

Mike Michalowicz: It is.

AJ Harper: That's a ton of books.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And you had a children's book in there that I wasn't part of.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: So I'm excited because for 17 years I have looked at my year ahead and thought, okay, what am I gonna be working on with Mike?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AJ Harper: That's been part of my annual planning for almost two decades, and so I'm excited because that gives me some mental space, some bandwidth. It's hard,

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: To work on. Uh, because I give everything to those books, as you know.

Mike Michalowicz: I know you do.

AJ Harper: So that's, I want some mental space to be working on my next book, and that's good news for me.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah. Well, now you have some readers who've taken and you perhaps have too, a break from the book, completely. I say readers, some of your,

AJ Harper: I haven't taken a book from a break from one of my book. I just have one book with my name on it. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: And you're pushing and pushing. Have you had people have been in your courses, have just said, I'm done with the book for now, and they've come back to it?

AJ Harper: Um, no one's come back.

Mike Michalowicz: No one's come back. Interesting. You know, what's their reason for leaving it in the first place?

AJ Harper: It's hard. It's sometimes it's hard to get in touch with them. There's one person we mutually know that I won't name because I don't wanna call that person out, who just decided they were not gonna be an author.

Mike Michalowicz: Hmm.

AJ Harper: After the book came out, had been working on another book.

Mike Michalowicz: Hmm.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: And, uh, just felt happy in what they were doing in the rest of their life.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. I was, I was gonna ask you what's the rest of the story?

AJ Harper: And I think that's fine. I mean, not all of us are, you know, lunatics like you and I, who are most writers are. You and me. Me and you. Not you and I.

Mike Michalowicz: Me and you.

AJ Harper: Yeah. Me and you. You know, most writers, there's this old joke, you know, if you wanna be a writer, but you can think of anything else you wanna do, do that other thing.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah.

AJ Harper: But, you know, so there's, so there's some of that there. But I think it where it wears people down if they don't have the passion or drive that's moving them forward, especially if they have unrealistic expectations.

I mean, that's, honestly, that's the, that's the real killer.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: That's the real killer. You, you have got to get your head on straight about publishing,

Mike Michalowicz: But the counterpoint is if you don't have unrealistic expectations, you'll never get there.

AJ Harper: There's a difference between setting a goal that's a stretch goal.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And knowing that you, not being heartbroken if you don't make it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And not taking it as evidence that you shouldn't be doing it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yes.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: So you're not taking, you know, you had a slow start with your first book. Totally. Yeah, but you kept on, you know, you just kept moving. I think what I see is people who just quit.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I think that separates the pro from the amateur

AJ Harper: For sure

Mike Michalowicz: is, I think the struggles are exactly the same. I think everything, the journey's exactly the same. It's just the pro doesn't quit or doesn't give up.

AJ Harper: It's, it's just, it's, it's the. The way the publishing industry works can be really, really hard.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: And there's glitches all the time and problems all the time, and delays all the time. And numbers come in shorter than you think and, and everything's harder than you think it's gonna be. And if you take any of that as evidence that you shouldn't have done it in the first place, you're probably gonna be out.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: Most people come into authorship thinking, who am I to write this? I have this idea, but you know, I really wanna do it. But, Hmm. Is, is, should I, um, do I have what it takes? And then the universe, it seems like the universe is telling them, Nope. In fact you don't. Yeah, you didn't sell enough copies.

This is, this is too hard. This is taking too long. None of that is evidence. It's just how it is. That's why I'm such an advocate of understanding publishing, because if you understand publishing. You are less likely to think that what happened has anything to do with you.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: You know, it's not the universe knocking on your shoulder and saying, that was dumb. You shouldn't have done that. It's more like, you know, okay, ramp up this effort, try this other thing. Okay. That was bad timing. Let's go again. What can we do? But most people just will take almost any evidence to quit.

Mike Michalowicz: There's a, uh. Alex Hermo who wrote A Hundred Million Dollar Leads.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm. Haven't read it.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: Really freaking good. Okay. It's a self-pub book. Really good. I did, there's certain books I get. I'm like, I don't want to like them. 'cause it just feels, felt icky. It felt like info marketing was really good. And uh, I was listening to, uh, a presentation there, an interview he was on, and he said, there's a lonely phase in any trajectory you take to professionalism. And then he goes, what it is, is in the beginning, your friends cheer you on, go for it. But once they see proof that you're actually making progress, then they start calling you out because you've sold out. So people

AJ Harper: really? He needs new friends.

Mike Michalowicz: Well, that's what he says. So he goes, the people supports you in the beginning. No, no one. You don't want your friends to be so different than you. Um. That you feel, um, a, a sort of anxiety back to yourself or, or judgment back to yourself. So we want our friends to do well, but not so well. It, this is a common thing.

It's the

AJ Harper: is it? I don't have friends like that. Uh,

Mike Michalowicz: I just, this, I think it's human nature as the crap.

AJ Harper: I mean, I really don't, who, who do you know who's, which one of my friends do you know, is thinking that?

Mike Michalowicz: Why? No, I don't know.

AJ Harper: I'm just saying I

Mike Michalowicz: Watch for a major transformation in your life that you're cry, craving for it. And when it happens fully and you appreciate it, watch for--

AJ Harper: I mean, I've had many. I mean, my good friends were happy that I, they were, they said nothing when I had my, my book came out. Like, it wasn't like, you know, like my longtime friends weren't tearing me down. But they also were like, that's good for you.

Let me tell you about my day.

Mike Michalowicz: There's a certain, we go through a life transformation and the people that aren't able to make that transformation disassociate with, 'cause there's a cognitive dissonance, there's, she could do it. I can't do it. What's wrong with me? Oh, you know, it's better to disassociate so I can stay comfortable with who I'm.

don't write *that* book!

Yeah, so, so Alex says that there's a state. So in his story, and I'm probably gonna blaise this, he, he was serving gyms and stuff and or building a gym, you know, like a fitness gym. And he was sleeping on the floor of his own gym 'cause he couldn't afford a home. Uh, also as he was building this gym and people like, oh, go for it. Like you're really devoted. That's when started making money and gets a. Uh, his own place. And now he has like two or three gyms. They're like, oh, are you, you not gonna stop? Like, is, is this not just enough success for you? So he starts getting that judgment. He, he calls that the lonely phase. He goes, there's a lonely phase where the people, the.

That you wanna associate with don't see the success in you. So it's not natural for them to associate with you yet the people who you did associate with, now see you disconnected from them. And he goes, the only person championing you on is you. So you have a choice, you can go back to your people. We, we actually had, we wrote about a story where this happened.

Someone has success. And yeah. And they got kicked outta their community, so to speak, and they decided to lose the success to be back at the community. Um. And during that lonely phase, he goes, if you, you, you, that's when we wish people would be rooting us on. That's when we need it the most. And that's not when you get it.

He goes, then once you arrive, and he's been very successful, he's got thousands of gyms or something. Once you arrive, that's when people start rooting you on. He goes, it's during the lonely phase, you need it. And that's when you don't get it.

AJ Harper: That's so inter, I feel like the luckiest girl in the world right now. You know why?

Mike Michalowicz: Why?

AJ Harper: I don't have this experience with my friend group at all.

Mike Michalowicz: Well...

AJ Harper: No, I, I'm just saying I'm a very, I'm probably one of the most successful people in my friend group. I may be the, the most, if you just think about career.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, oh, yeah. But holistically, we generally are the average of our group, so you're probably the most successful financially and career-wise.

AJ Harper: I don't know. I'm really proud of all the stuff they do. I'm not even gonna claim that. Financially. Yes. Let's just say financially. Financially. But I don't measure that. That means nothing to me.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: Correct. And that's why I think it means nothing to your group. But if you do something that is, is core to your group definition, and you become outside that even though it's an improvement in your life, that's where the disassociation happens.

AJ Harper: I'm gonna tell you, I'm just, I am. We are in a debate mode now.

Mike Michalowicz: I love it. Oh, well, I'll give you an example from my own life, my, uh, a group I associated with, um, longtime friends and so forth, I have a friend who, what's important to them is not spousal time as much as community time with the other guys.

AJ Harper: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: And. To me, it's like, oh, we should do something with the spouses. And they're like, no, just the guys, and we're gonna go, you know, golfing and do whatever they, they do. And then I've been removed from that group over time. No, like, Hey, you're out, Mike, just not invited. Like, that's how it happens. And like, oh, we don't want you, part of that because I prioritize something that's not their priority.

And then there's this dissonance.

AJ Harper: Okay.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: I'm just saying in, I am 52 and I have friends I've had since I was 15 years old.

Mike Michalowicz: Me too.

AJ Harper: Yeah, but I'm just saying I've had a lot of success in that time. We live very different lives and I don't feel that, and I am super lucky.

Mike Michalowicz: That is. You're super lucky. I get it.

AJ Harper: I am very grateful.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. I totally get it. I totally get it. Um,

AJ Harper: but that's all right.

Mike Michalowicz: And yeah, we're, we're a little off track.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: off track, but I could see how you could No, we're not off track.

Mike Michalowicz: We're off track. Not track at all. 'cause it's the, it's the common values. So a core group that stays with you, you're definitely sharing the same values when, when your value shifts or something is significant to you and they see you, I improving in that category.

I think that's where it happens. So with authorship, you're writing a book. Um, there's a very lonely period in authorship. For me, it's when you're launching a book, people are like, oh, that's amazing. You're writing a book and stuff. But then there's this period, once your book is out there that you're in this no man's land and you gotta, you're in the fight alone.

It's not like every morning someone wakes up and like, how's your book going? We got this and supporting you. It's a lonely period. Um, but the contemporaries I aspire to connect with, they wouldn't associate with me 'cause I'm. I'm a nobody. There was one guy, Barry Moltz, I mean, you probably heard his story.

Who endorsed my book.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: And he was a, he was an established author and he is like, yeah, of course I'll support you. 'cause I believe in new authors. Everyone else I reached out to, which included the names that subsequently endorsed my books or like, um, sorry, you know, good, good luck. Or, or no response.

AJ Harper: But now you're talking about endorsements and we're talking about friend groups.

Mike Michalowicz: I'm talking about business equations or associations or whatever, that group, now I can walk in a room and I have so much more credibility with that group. I have an instant Oh yeah, of course. I'll so do

AJ Harper: do you think people might give up on their, like get take a break from writing, take a break from their book because of that?

Mike Michalowicz: Yes. The lonely period.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: As everyone, Moses said, I think you just give up 'cause you're, you're in this no man's land. The only person supporting you is you.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: Yeah. You need better peeps.

Mike Michalowicz: It's very hard to find them.

AJ Harper: You know what, that's one of the reasons I started my author community.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah,

AJ Harper: Because they're that for each other.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. Yeah. And maybe for you too.

AJ Harper: And they're, yes, and they're in the trenches. I mean, when I tell you that every day is about celebrating somebody else's win, however small, and, you know, sometimes you have to make the thing that you're yearning for.

Mike Michalowicz: So you, right before I came in this room, I was calling this guy, I dunno if you heard me talking about,

AJ Harper: I did.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. You know, he's the, the third partner in Burt's Bees. He's the third part of the third person into Burt's Bees. Grew to a billion dollars. They sold to Clorox. He, myself, and a hundred other entrepreneurs. Sadly, some people have passed away. 30. I don't, yeah, 30 years ago now. Decided to get together to be a kinda support group for each other in the entrepreneur journey.

I. And that's a lot of these businesses we referenced in the books, the big successes came outta the group. Yeah. It ain't no coincidence.

AJ Harper: No.

Mike Michalowicz: And it's not like, oh, it is a miracle. Like these people came together and it all happened to be successful. No. Like everyone came with a common value base and just started elevating each other through the journey.

And I think with authorship, that community is big. And when you're, when you don't have, it gets lonely. I can see the need or the desire to abandon the book. For me, it's been creating the room is the best way to get in the groups. Yeah. Same every single time.

AJ Harper: Same. Yeah. You created the room. Yeah. So if you're taking a break from writing though, so you're not gonna take a break from authorship entirely, right?

don't write *that* book!

You're not gonna take a break from all your books that you already wrote, but maybe you're gonna take a break from writing. Why would you do that? I think there's very good reasons to do that. I do it. I have seasons, you know?

Mike Michalowicz: Okay. Well walk me through it.

AJ Harper: So I need time to think about what I'm gonna do next.

And I don't, I, I used to punish myself if I didn't write every single day. And, you know, my great hero, Steve Pressfield, the second that he starts, that he's done with one book, he, the next day, he starts on the next one. And I thought, oh, I'm gonna be like Steve.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: But I'm actually not like him. I need to have a little minute. To think about what I wanna do next.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And I'm a processor, so I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I think it's great. There's also, let's be real, sometimes we're not writing, writing. Sometimes we're in development. Which is where I'm right now with my second book, thinking about it, last night I was at an event.

That's part of me developing the next book. I was joined this Zoom call with this author and um, that's an adjacent topic to what I'm interested in, and I just start collecting my little pebbles. And I'm paying really close attention and letting my brain sort it all out.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: So that's like, is that even a break from writing? Probably not. 'cause I'm just sorting it out. But I'm not actually putting words to the page yet.

Mike Michalowicz: What I'm here is you're just embracing the you, and the you in this process.

AJ Harper: And sometimes you have to, you have to take a break because you need to let your brain be free from thinking about one topic or issue or central question, or if you write fiction, the characters, you know, you need to, yeah, you need to get a, a break in between.

don't write *that* book!

Um, if you're worried about losing momentum, which can happen all the time, by the way. You can always put yourself on some sort of writing regimen that's not to be sold. You know, journaling or something like that.

Mike Michalowicz: So this is interesting. So what I'm hearing from our conversation is a break from a book can be just a break from writing. But you're still, you're still in the process and it's necessary. I'm also hearing is that there's different ways we express. You said you're a processor.

AJ Harper: Mm-hmm.

Mike Michalowicz: If you didn't honor that, you. And try to force yourself to be Steve in Pressfield. I, I'm not really connected with him, so I have to say, Steve,

AJ Harper: I'm barely connected.

Mike Michalowicz: It's fine. Well, you can say Steve, I won't say Steve.

AJ Harper: He ref, that's how he, anyway

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: That's how he signs his emails.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, okay. To you.

AJ Harper: I think that to my end, they say, Mr. This is Mr. Pressfield. Pretty sure it's everyone.

Mike Michalowicz: So Steve Pressfield, like, if you force yourself to be Steve Pressfield, um, it's so unnatural. Of course it won't work. I wonder if that's really the lesson here. We gotta just embrace who we are naturally. So I'm saying I'm taking a break from the book. It's taking a break from writing. My energy, I have to keep expressing it. Otherwise is unnatural. It's all going to marketing. Like I'm working so hard on this marketing compared to the past.

AJ Harper: Yeah. But I, I think there's also times when you have to take a break. Maybe life gets in the way. Yeah. And you shouldn't feel bad about it.

Mike Michalowicz: No.

AJ Harper: It's, it's, it's doesn't mean that it's the end of anything.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: No, no. Um, what, what if. Have you done this? Like you, you're working on a book and say, oops, this book's premature. It's the wrong time. Is that a, a justification for a break or do you iterate? Are you still---

AJ Harper: No. Find something else to work on if you're feeling the urge to work.

Mike Michalowicz: So if you've gotta write, you gotta write. But if you're writing on the wrong thing, you can keep writing. Just write on the next right thing.

AJ Harper: First of all, you can do whatever you want. You know,

Mike Michalowicz: I just, your head just did that. One of those you like, you were on the street and you were about to pull a knife out on me.

AJ Harper: I mean. I, I worry about people taking too super long break. I've got so many students who, um, they just let themselves fall into an abyss. It's not really a break.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: They're just disconnected completely. And that's, that's not good. If you have the, if you have the goal of trying to finish the book, really long breaks are hard. Because it's hard to get back into it

Mike Michalowicz: What about readership? I mean, can you disappoint your readership or disenchant them because you've given a big pause or put a inserted a big pause.

AJ Harper: Oh my gosh. Yeah. I mean there's, um, you know, are, aren't people still waiting for Game of Thrones?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: So that little known fact, George RR Martin lived in the neighborhood where I lived in, in Santa Fe. Oh. I didn't ever meet him. But he bought, uh, you know, my good friend Zoe Bird?

Mike Michalowicz: Yes.

AJ Harper: He bought up a bunch of houses in our neighborhood, including hers and, um, so that he uses different houses, I guess, to write or a guest house or for work.

Mike Michalowicz: Are they all adjacent to each other?

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: They're all, this is, there's kind of like, it's not really a cul-de-sac, it's more like a, a little corner of this part of Santa Fe.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's interesting.

AJ Harper: Yeah. He's not done. I've had, when I had my publishing company, when we sold it, we had, uh, let's see, 1, 2, 3 series that were unfinished. So meaning the authors still had to turn and work.

Mike Michalowicz: Mm-hmm.

AJ Harper: And we'd been waiting a really long time. One of them we gave up on completely. The other two we did not give up on. And, um, I'm, I still haven't seen them. Um, really sad too because, I mean, maybe they'll, maybe they'll happen, but we sold the company in so like 2021 and by then we had already been waiting a couple of years for those, so

Mike Michalowicz: Oh my gosh. And you paid out an advance.

AJ Harper: I mean, our advances were tiny,

Mike Michalowicz: but still paid out in advance, so

AJ Harper: Yeah. It was more about not even the, it's not even the issue. The issue is completing the series for readers who are dying to see it.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, it's, yeah,

AJ Harper: it happens all the time.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, I bet.

AJ Harper: Yeah. But that, you know, both of those situations, there were personal life events that took hold, and then you just get into the abyss.

When you're in the abyss, it's really hard to get out of it. And I know what at least one of those authors is thinking. They're thinking it's too late. It's been too long. And I think this happens to a lot of writers. Oh, I took too long of a break. No one's gonna remember me. No one wants this anymore.

And it's the same tape that you had in the beginning when you started writing books and you thought, oh, who's gonna listen to me? Yeah, I wanna do it, but who's gonna care? Yeah. I

don't write *that* book!

really wanna do this, but no one's gonna read it. And it's that same energy coming back at you now, but it's 10 times worse.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: 'cause you feel like you failed. But a break is not a failure. The only way to do it is to just. Write, write out, write your way out of it.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. It's interesting with guitar, um, 'cause I've been traveling, I have a travel guitar, but it just has been inconvenient even for that to bring with me. So I've gone a week and a half now without playing and now I'm leaving. This afternoon to go Boston, so forth. I'm away for another week. I got home, I had three minutes. I'm like, I gotta pick up that guitar. Just, just for three minutes. And just went through a couple practice things and put it down.

It's hard. It's really hard to get back to it after two or three consecutive weeks or a month. And I assume, I wonder if writing is the same way.

AJ Harper: Writing is absolutely the same way.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And imagine if it's two or three years.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh.

AJ Harper: It starts to be then is this really something I do anymore?

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah, yeah. You lose the identity.

AJ Harper: You lose the identity, so you don't wanna take too big a break. There's other times when a break is really good. I always love this story of, um. Arthur Miller, he was a playwright and he's most famous for *Death of a Salesman*. *Crucible*. But his, the play that he gained success with first was called *All My Sons* and it as a Tony Award-winning drama desk, award-winning play.

And after that, he kind of went to go work in a factory. And he had always worked. He had worked in factories up to that. It wasn't like, It wasn't like he was some like rich college dude. Yeah. Saying I'm gonna be do this novel thing and we're, he'd, he always worked in factories.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: But he needed to get away from the noise. So success can be a noise. That influences you and takes you away from what you need to be doing as an artist.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: Um, there's a lot of stories like that. People who disappear.

Mike Michalowicz: I believe it. There was a, a Goete? Do you know that band? Um, the, the, uh, somebody like the girl I used to know or something, whatever, they had one massive hit song. Um, or someone I used to know or something like to that effect.

AJ Harper: Somebody I used to know, somebody, I

Mike Michalowicz: used to know somebody used to love something like that.

AJ Harper: Yes, I think I was on Glee. Therefore I know it.

Mike Michalowicz: it. This band, it is a individual. Massive hit massive, uh, stadium tours. It gets all these deals and he gave away his money and said, this is the, this is exactly what I did not want.

I love to write music. I don't want to be this massive success. Um, and gave it all away. It is interesting how it can mess with your mind, so I know you're looking up who it is, what

AJ Harper: Somebody that I used to know.

Mike Michalowicz: Somebody that I used to know.

AJ Harper: Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: That song. So it just. Success can be a burden. And, uh, he skirted it all. So he just, he gave everything away. Pretty interesting. Uh, when's it not a good idea to take a break from a book? Is there

AJ Harper: when you're telling yourself that it's not, you're not good enough, uh, no one's gonna care. Yeah. Um, or if you're telling yourself you're not ready in terms of. Skills you can gain that the way you gain the skills is by doing it.

Mike Michalowicz: And sometimes when opportunity presents, you gotta grab that tiger by a tail.

don't write *that* book!

AJ Harper: Yeah. Sometimes you have to do it. I mean, I've mentioned earlier that I was at an event last night of at, this is what we say now when we're on Zoom. Yeah.

Mike Michalowicz: At an event. Yeah. But I was really looking for in my pajamas.

AJ Harper: I was really looking forward to it because, um, I had done this pre-order to be part of it.

It was with Suleika Joad. She wrote *Between Two Kingdoms*, which is a memoir about her cancer journey, and that was a New York Times bestselling book. And then she wrote this book, which Creative Alchemy, which comes out today. Today is,

Mike Michalowicz: oh, congratulations

AJ Harper: Today, April 22nd. Yes it is. And, uh, so Random House, not.

Uh, it wasn't Penguin Random House. It was just Random House put on, um, a Zoom call with her and the person hosting it was Liz Gilbert. Um. And they were, it was like being in a private conversation with them where they were calling each other by their nicknames for each other.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh.

AJ Harper: There was about 500 of us on Zoom and then a whole bunch more people on YouTube.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah.

AJ Harper: And they were talking about her book. And so the thing about Suleika Joad is if, you know, you might know some about her, if you saw the documentary *American Symphony*, which is about her husband Jean Batiste, who, uh, is a musician and composer.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: And. That de also, and during the documentary, which was supposed to be about his creative work, she ended up having a resurgence of cancer and she has very serious cancer, um, very painful treatment.

So they ended up shooting her in the hospital, which it didn't know they were gonna do as it related to also John's journey. And she was doing a lot of, um, watercolors in her hospital room. And she explained it last night, so, Hmm. The book *Creative Alchemy* is about journaling out of isolation, and so I'm really excited to get my hands on it, inter read it.

don't write *that* book!

I pre-ordered it, but it hasn't arrived yet. But what she said last night, really. I, I thought it was so apropos for today. She said I, I couldn't write because of the medications. So her, you know, her head would hurt her eyesight and she just, she couldn't use her regular daily writing practice. Yeah. So she made watercolors.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, interesting.

AJ Harper: And the watercolors were from these, she, she started having night terrors because of the medications with all these like, um, sort of. Apocalyptic type animals in them. So she painted them in the morning and I thought, she's still writing.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh yeah,

AJ Harper: she's still writing. She can't write because of the medication. So she's gonna find another way to...

Mike Michalowicz: Express herself.

AJ Harper: To express herself. And that's all this is. Are you gonna cut yourself off from expressing yourself? Does it just take a different form? For me, it's always an, I'm always doing it. You know, I might not actually be writing my book two right now, but in my back of my mind I am.

Because I'm collecting all my pebbles till I figure out what it is. And um, you are not writing right now 'cause we're in substantive edit, right. So the writing is permanent is done.

Mike Michalowicz: It's done. Yeah.

AJ Harper: But you are. Yeah. Because you're creating the container in which this new book lives.

Mike Michalowicz: Yeah. In summary, what I'm hearing is you can take a pause on writing, but not a pause on authorship.

AJ Harper: No. Even if you have to do watercolors in your hospital room.

Mike Michalowicz: Oh, that's such a good line. We should end the show right there. Um, but we will wrap things up.

AJ Harper: We will wrap it up.

don't write *that* book!

Mike Michalowicz: up. So next week we're gonna talk about using graphics and illustrations in your book. Um. I think often overlooked, I think often done incorrectly.

And I've been going through the manuscript of the money habit to identify where there's additional graphics. I, I don't know if I found one yet. I think I have maybe one. And you suggested there may be some more too. So I'd love to get, uh, your feedback on that. Not necessarily on the episode. Um, I wanna remind our listeners.

AJ hosts only twice a year. An event at her place on Michelin, uh, Michelin Island. No, I have Madeline Island.

AJ Harper: It's four times and it's Madeline Island.

Mike Michalowicz: Madeline, okay. Madeline Island. Four times a year. I thought it was, I mean, sold out. I, yeah.

AJ Harper: I only really have, uh, at this, this moment, I have a spot for August, but probably by the time this airs, I won't.

Mike Michalowicz: Okay.

AJ Harper: But I will have for October,

Mike Michalowicz: Madeline Island. Um, go to ajharper.com. Do that right now. Also, you can email us both at hello@dwtbpodcast.com if you want to sponsor the show. Uh, we've officially been solicited, we've decided it's a good idea. Um, so we have the opportunity available, but we also wanna know what do you wanna hear?

What stories, um, do you have to share with us that we could feature you on an episode and something that you're doing in your author journey. So all that can be done by emailing us at hello@dwtbpodcast.com. We are actively looking for our imprint, uh, that I am a founder or co-founder of, with page two called Simplified.

If you are an author in the entrepreneurial space, you can email us there too. We'd love to explore and see what you got going on. Alright, thanks for joining us today. The Grand final reminder. Don't write that book. Write the greatest book you can.